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WASHINGTON, D. C.

DEBATE ON EMANCIPATION, IN THE LEGISLATURE OF VIRGINIA, IN 1853.

[CONCLUDED.]
Extracts from the speech of Henry Berry, of Jefferson.

Sir, I believe that slavery on the physical body was ever more certain, steady, and fatal in its progress, than in this cancer on the political body of the State of Virginia. It is eating into her very vitals. And shall we admit that the evil is very deadly? Shall we set the part of a puny patient, suffering under the ravages of a fatal disease, who would say the remedy is too painful, the dose too nauseous, I cannot bear it; who would close his eyes to the cancer, and still lament up to death? No, sir, I would bear the knife and the cautery for the sake of health.

I believe it is high time that this subject should be discussed and considered by the people of Virginia. I believe that the people are awakened on the subject, but not alarmed; I believe they will consider it calmly, and decide upon it correctly. Sir, I have no fears, now, for any general results from any act of emancipation, by the reduced state of our population. I know that we have the power to crush any such effort at a blow. I know that any such effort on their part, at this day, will end in the annihilation of all concerned in it; and I believe our greatest security now, is in their knowledge of these things—in their knowledge of their own weakness.

Pass as severe laws as you will, to keep these unfortunate creatures in ignorance, it is vain, unless you can extinguish that spark of intellect which God has given them. Let any man who advocates slavery, examine the system of laws which we have adopted (from stern necessity, it may be said) towards these creatures, and he may shed a tear upon that; and would to God, sir, the memory of it might be blotted out forever. Sir, we have, as far as possible, closed every avenue by which light might enter their minds; we have only to go one step further to extinguish the capacity to see the light, and our work would be complete; they would then be reduced to the level of the brute of the field, and we should be safe; and I am not certain that we would not do it, if we could find out the necessary process—and that under the plea of necessity. But, sir, this is impossible. And can man be in the midst of freedom, and not know what freedom is? Can he feel that he has the power to assert his liberty, and will he not do it? Yes, sir; with the certainty of the current of time will be do it, whenever he has the power. Sir, to prove that the time will come, I need offer no other argument than that of arithmetic, the conclusions from which are clear demonstrations on this subject. The data are before us all, and every man can work out the process for himself. Sir, a death-struggle must come between the two classes, in which the one or the other will be extinguished forever. Who can contemplate such a catastrophe as even possible, and be indifferent?

Extract from the speech of Thomas Marshall, of Fauquier.
Wherefore, then, object to slavery? Reason it is ruinous to the whites—retards improvement, roots out an industrious population, banishes the yeomanry of the country, deprives the spinner, the weaver, the smith, the shoemaker, the carpenter, of employment and support. The evil admits of no remedy. It is increasing, and will continue to increase, until the whole country will be inundated with one black wave covering its whole extent, with a few white faces here and there floating on the surface. The master has no capital but what is vested in human flesh; the father, instead of being richer for his sons, is at a loss to provide for them. There is no diversity of occupations, no incentive to enterprise. Labor of every description is despicable, because performed mostly by slaves. Our towns are stationary, our villages almost everywhere declining; and the general aspect of the country marks the curse of a wasteful, idle, reckless population, who have no interest in the soil, and care not how much it is impoverished. Public improvements are neglected, and the entire continent does not present a region for which nature has done as much, and at so little.

Extracts from the speech of James McDowell, Jr., of Rockbridge.
Who, sir, that looks at this property as a legislator, and marks its effect upon our national advance, but weeps over it as the worst of patriots? Who looks to this unhappy bondage of our unhappy people in the midst of our society, and thinks of its incidents and its plagues, and weeps over it as a curse upon him who inflicts as upon him who suffers it?
If I am to judge from the tone of our debate, from the concessions or all hands expressed, there is not a man in this body—not one, perhaps that is even represented here—who would not have thanked the generations that have gone before us, if acting as public men, they had brought this bondage to a close—to a close which would not have thanked them, if acting as private men, on private notice they had relinquished the property which their mistlekinde has devolved upon us. Proud as are the names for intellect and patriotism, which enrich the volumes of our history, and reverently as we turn to them at this period of waning reputation, that name, that man, above all parallel, would have been the chief, who could have blotted out this curse from his country—those, above all others, would have received the homage of an eternal gratitude, who, casting away every suggestion of petty interest, had broken the yoke which in an evil hour had been imposed, and had translated, as a free man, to another continent, the outcast and the wretched being who burdens our with his presence, and defiles it with his crimes.
But, sir, it has been otherwise appointed. Slavery has come down to us from our fathers, and the question now is, Shall we, in turn, hand it over to our children—hand it over to them, aggravated with every attribute of evil? Shall we perpetuate the calamity we deplore, and become to posterity the objects, not of kindness, but of cursing?
Sir, you may place the slave where you please—you may dry up, to your utmost, the fountains of his feelings, the springs of his thought—you may close upon his mind every avenue to knowledge, and cloud it over with artificial night—you may yoke him to your labor, as the ox, which liveth only to work, and worketh only to live—you may put him under any process, which, without destroying his value as a slave, will debase and crush him as a rational being—you may do this, and the idea that he was born to be free will survive it all. It is allied to his hope of immortality—it is the ethical part of his nature, which oppression cannot reach—it is a torch lit up in his soul by the hand of the Deity, and never meant to be extinguished by the hand of man.

If gentlemen do not see nor feel the evil of

SLAVERY.

mark that it constitutes, and must forever constitute, an obstacle to abolition, requiring all the wisdom and discretion of Legislature and people; but the removal of free blacks, or the purchase and deportation of slaves, can involve no danger. If, indeed, the whole fabric shall totter to its fall, when bunched by the gentle hand, it must rest on a precarious foundation. If danger lurks under just, benignant legislation, aiming to relieve both master and slave, and to combine justice with humanity, will the period ever come when it will be safe to act?

But, admitting the subject cannot be approached without danger now, the great question for us, to determine it, whether, by delay, it may not become fearfully worse, and in process of time attain a magnitude far transcending our feeble powers. We owe it to our children to determine whether we or they shall incur the hazard of attempting something, which they will not let us alone. We cannot correct the march of time, nor stop the current of events. We cannot change the course of nature, nor prevent the silent but sure operation of causes now at work.

Extracts from the speech of Philip A. Bolling, of Buckingham.
The time will come—and it may be sooner than many are willing to believe—when this oppressed and degraded race cannot be held as they now are—when a change will be effected, by means abhorrent, Mr. Speaker, to you, and to the feelings of every good man.

The wounded adder will recoil, and sting the foot that tramples upon it. The day is fast approaching, when those who oppose all action upon this subject, and instead of aiding in devising some feasible plan for freeing their country from an acknowledged curse, cry "impossible" to every plan suggested, will curse their perverseness and lament their folly.

Those gentlemen who hug Slavery to their bosoms, and "roll it as a sweet morsel under their tongues," have been very lavish in their denunciations of all who are for stirring one inch in this subject.

There is, sir, a still, small voice, which speaks to the heart of man in a tone too clear and distinct to be disregarded. It tells him that every system of Slavery is based upon injustice and oppression. If gentlemen disregard it now, and lull their consciences to sleep, they may be aroused to a sense of their danger when it is too late to repair their errors.

However the employment of slave labor might be defended gentlemen would not, could not, justify it from a domestic point of view. It is a system which should be held in total disrepute, and men should disdain to hold their fellow-creatures as articles of traffic, disregarding all the ties of blood and affection, tearing asunder all those sympathies dear to men—dividing husbands and wives, parents and children, as they would out asunder a piece of cotton cloth. They have hearts and feelings, like other men. How many a broken heart, how many a Rachel mourns, because her home is left unto her desolate! The time has come when these feelings could not be suppressed—the day would come when they could not be resisted. Slavery was and had long been, offensive to the moral feelings of a large proportion of the community. Their lips had been sealed, but their minds had been unfettered; many had thought, and thought deeply, on the subject. This, sir, is a Christian community. They read in their Bibles, "Do unto all men as you would have them do unto you," and this golden rule and Slavery are hard to reconcile. Gentlemen may, perhaps, curl the lip of scorn at such considerations; but such a feeling existed in Virginia.

Extracts from the speech of Charles J. Faulkner, of Berkeley.

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WASHINGTON, D. C.

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Washington, December 15, 1853.

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